



1st Battalion, 5th Marines

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December 2007

Special points of interest:

- * Company Updates
- * Pictures from Abroad
- * Upcoming Family Events

From Our Colonel...

Dear BLT 1/5 Families and Friends,

Our first month underway has had its share of changes in "the word" primarily due to Tropical Cyclone Sidr and the destruction it caused in Bangladesh. I thank you for your patience and continued support as we begin our WESTPAC deployment. Already, some members of the BLT have conducted sustainment training in Guam and enjoyed short liberty port calls in Saipan as well as Guam. The Marines and Sailors aboard the USS Tarawa are positioned to participate in the Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR) mission ongoing in Bangladesh. As one of America's forward deployed forces, we stand ready to do what is required; from helping those around the world in need to conducting combat operations ashore. The

duration of our mission in Bangladesh is not known at this time, but I do know this- we will stay until the mission is complete and the host nation no longer needs us. On behalf of all of the Marines and Sailors in BLT 1/5, I thank you for your continued support and understanding as tasks, locations and schedules change in pursuit of our Nation's interests around the globe. No matter the circumstance, we will always accomplish the mission. We all look forward to seeing you upon our return. Semper Fidelis,

LtCol John E. Merna



From Our Sergeant Major...

Family and friends of Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 5th Marines,

I hope this letter finds you all in good health and spirits. During the last four weeks across all three ships your husbands, sons, and dads have shared a piece of birthday cake and turkey dinner in between drills, deck shoots, and fast roping. Our course and speed may have changed slightly since our

departure but we are still on schedule. The Cleveland and Germantown have finished their training in Guam, got some well deserved liberty, re-embarked and are back underway. On the big deck (Tarawa), we are still steaming towards Bangladesh so nothing has changed since our departure early November. Of course, December will bring new challenges and without question we will be prepared



for any contingency.

Thank you for your continued love and support.

Semper Fidelis,

Sergeant Major Dillree



H&S COMPANY

Family and Friends,

Greetings from abroad...

I would like first thank all of you for the love and support you give to your husband or son everyday, the men are doing very well.

As you know, there is no open discussion of where we are going and the times we will be there.

Our last month on ship has been quite uneventful. The men are adapting to the close quarters, short showers, and long chow lines. They have conducted some training, but not

the normal fast-paced we are accustomed to. We do have the benefit of a gym open 24 hours, so physical training is the sanity check we get everyday.

As the technology world continues to astound us all, the ship is not short on much. We do get satellite TV, but are limited to the Armed Forces Network. We have watched all of the big football games, and we also have continuous movies that play on the ship's TV station.

The cooks did an outstanding job on our Thanksgiving meal. We had all the trimmings,

not like home, but will do for government work.

All Marines and Sailors will see more changes in their pay in the near future, so be looking for those changes.

Semper Fi

First Sergeant Sheline

H&S Company

"FEAR IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."
-General W. T. Sherman, 1891

ALPHA COMPANY

Dear Family and Friends,

The Marines and Sailors of Alpha Company are doing well. We have been keeping busy with a variety of activities to ensure that we are prepared for whatever missions the 11th MEU may receive.

Most recently we conducted training on the island of Guam. Guam is a small territory of the United States in the same time zone as Australia, just south of Japan and east of the Philippines. It is a tropical island, so it rained 3 to 5 times a day. The island is inhabited by huge spiders that weave webs overnight and surprised us in the morning. There were also a lot of snakes on the island. We learned that the snakes were brought to the island in the mid 1940s. Since the snakes have no natural predators, their population has grown to over two million strong. Guam was once populated by exotic birds which the snakes have all but wiped out. Besides all of the rain, spiders, and snakes, we were glad to be on land, and got to enjoy some gorgeous scenery and good training.

While in Guam the company trained at Andrews Air Force Base, which is an abandoned base housing complex. The Marines rotated through several different training stations which included patrolling, convoy operations, and basic urban room clearing. We also had the opportunity to hone our skills during a machine gun live fire range. Overall it was a good experience and your loved ones did a great job.

Ship life has kept the Marines of Alpha Company busy as well. On ship the NCO's of the company have been teaching classes that vary from weapons employment to leadership. Some Marines in the company have been using the little free time they have to learn Algebra, and read books such as "Imperial Grunts." Despite the tight living conditions

the company has maintained a positive attitude and is keeping busy.

A few of our Marines have distinguished themselves in these few months on ship. The following Marines have been promoted:

LCpl Zack Jongbloedunterhorst to Cpl Jongbloedunterhorst

LCpl Kyle Gist to Cpl Gist

LCpl Erich Burner to Cpl Burner

LCpl Alberto MejiaMarcial to Cpl MejiaMarcial

Cpl Christopher Gonzalez to Sgt Gonzalez

Sgt Justin Timbs to SSgt Timbs

The following Marines have received awards while we were on ship:

LCpl McArthur – Meritorious Mast

LCpl Moore – Meritorious Mast and Marine of the Week

LCpl Dempsey – Meritorious Mast

Cpl Jurca – Certificate of commendation

LCpl Camacho – Certificate of commendation

LCpl McClure – Certificate of commendation

LCpl Pouchoulen – Certificate of commendation

Cpl Stiner – Certificate of commendation

LCpl Valenzuela – Certificate of commendation

LCpl Burke – Certificate of commendation

LCpl Clawson – Certificate of commendation

Sgt McCannon – Certificate of commendation

LCpl Balzen – Navy Achievement Medal

Cpl Bossow – Navy Achievement Medal

Cpl Mahovlic – Navy Achievement Medal

Sgt Hughes – Navy Achievement Medal

SSgt Timbs – Navy Achievement Medal

Additionally LCpl Moore was named the Marine of the week by the ship's captain for his exemplary performance. These Marines make us all proud and embody the attitude that has made Alpha Company successful.

We are not sure of what the future holds for the 11th MEU or Alpha Company. Despite this uncertainty, your loved ones have remained focused and have performed well. You and your loved ones have sacrificed much to defend our country. For that you all should be proud.

Being far away from you reminds the Marines of the company what is important and they think of you often. All the Marines appreciate the care packages you have sent. On behalf of the Marine of Alpha Company I would like to thank you for your support and prayers. Know that your loved ones miss you and can't wait to see you. Again, we acknowledge the sacrifices you make to support us and are truly grateful. Happy holidays.

Semper Fidelis
Capt Ortiz and 1stSgt Offutt

BRAVO COMPANY

To the families of the Marines & Sailors aboard USS Germantown,
Hello, I am Captain Daniel J. Thomas, the Commander of Troops for the Marines and Sailors embarked aboard the USS Germantown. We are roughly a month into the deployment and I want to take this opportunity to communicate to everyone back home the great job your Marines and Sailors are doing. During the at sea periods the Marines and Sailors are rampant aboard the ship, participating in martial arts exercises, live fire shoots, NCO classes and my personal favorite physical training. They are indeed sustaining

their physical and marksmanship ability to remain ready when called upon by our great country.

The Marines and Sailors have also distinguished themselves while ashore. They maximized the training opportunity in Guam by conducting live fire training and urban and jungle movement. During the visit to Saipan they performed with the professionalism and discipline that has come to be expected of an expeditionary force. I want to personally thank you the families for your great support throughout the workup and now while we are deployed. It can be difficult

being away from the ones you love during the holiday season. I want you to take solace in knowing that your Marines and Sailors are the best our country has to offer, and they stand ready to accomplish any mission they are assigned. This is in large part due to the support they receive from you at home. I thank you for that support and ask that you continue to send the e-mail, moto-mail, letters and care packages.

Semper Fidelis
Capt D. J. Thomas

Greetings from the Germantown Marines!

After leaving on the 4th, the next three weeks had the Marines settling in and getting their "sea legs" about them. We usually started our days with reveille at 0600, and going to chow or PT. The mornings and afternoons were taken with classroom training in Pashtu language instructions, selected country briefings, communications classes, and individual platoon training instructions. The Marines, at the end of the day, would often write emails to their loved ones using the Marines' internet cafe', playing video games in the game room, conducting their own Physical Training programs, or spending some quiet time reading and resting in the berthing areas.

We spent some quality training time in Guam the

last week; being able to get off the ship and stretch our legs was invaluable. The Marines concentrated on honing their marksmanship skills in BZO, EMP, and night fire, MOUT training, and jungle patrolling, and seeing how many coconuts they could consume! For many, it was the first time being outside of the United States, and the beautiful Island of Guam was a tremendous experience for us all.

After, the Marines enjoyed some well-deserved liberty in the port of Saipan. The community was truly gracious and hospitable as the Marines enjoyed seeing an island ingrained with Marine Corps History. The Marines participated in the "Adopt a Sailor/Marine" program, and the Community Outreach program, working with a local environmentalist in policing the Garapan district

of Saipan. The Marines got a chance to see the National American Memorial Park in Saipan, with an interesting museum and several monuments in the park right on the beach. The island provided the Marines with many water sports, including snorkeling, swimming, and just lounging on the beach.

This month, we have on board 4 fathers with newborns: SSgt Miller, SSgt O'Brien, Sgt Paul, and Cpl Thomas; our thoughts and prayers are with their wives and newborns.

As we depart for our next mission, all of us are thankful for our most important parts of our lives; our families back home. We keep you all in our prayers and thoughts.

VR ~ 1stSgt Chaffin

CHARLIE COMPANY

Greetings to all our Friends and Families,

We are doing well aboard the U.S.S Tarawa. The Marines have situated themselves in the berthing spaces and getting on with shipboard life. We have had some busy periods mixed in with ample time to relax. The ship in itself is a small city complete with stores, barbers shops, and its own Cable TV provider. The Marines have persevered some hot humid days aboard the ship with their usual resilience and seem no worse for the wear. Several Marines have been attending language classes in Arabic and Pashtu enabling us to be ready for a multitude of contingencies when we get called. The men have had a few opportunities to shoot their weapons and Fast-rope from a stationary and moving helicopter to sharpen their skills for helicopter operations.

The city like quality of the ship allows for a great training opportunity. The men of the company have been using the ship to simulate an urban area, and by using standard patrolling and information gathering techniques, have begun to piece together and understand the interconnected nature of the ship. The exercise is helping to develop the information gathering, observation and analytical skills of the men. These are key skills in conducting counter-insurgent operations.

Other than that, they have been busy getting classes from the squad leaders, platoon sergeants, and platoon commanders and some are taking advantage of the college courses at night using this time to start working on a college degree.

This month we had the pleasure of awarding Lance Corporal Zaborski with a Meritorious

Mast for his superb performance during the pre-deployment workup. We also awarded Corporals Ducote, Raymond, Luther Certificates of Commendation for their outstanding efforts during the workup. Additional to the awards, we promoted Sergeant Rodriguez to Staff Sergeant, Corporals Tritle and Bustos to the rank of Sergeant and Lance Corporals Luther and Shackleford to Corporal. All promotions long overdue to those Marines who have been performing well over their ranks for some time now. Lastly, this month Corporals Estradaprado and Ramirezcabrera graduated from Corporals Course.

We thank everybody for the mail and packages and the continued support. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers as we continue our movement west.

March or Die
Jay Lappe CO Jared Ogle 1stSgt

WEAPONS COMPANY

Weapons Company families,

Your Marines are in good spirits which have been kept high by the steady flow of emails, MotoMail, and packages received from their families back home.

Since departing California in early November, we have kept our days busy with all types of training. We have steadily increased our Fast Rope skills by starting from static ropes on the

elevators and progressing to full blown tactical runs on CH-46 helicopters. We have also kept our shooting skills honed by conducting small arms shoots on the flight deck.

As far as daily life, the Marines are spending a lot of time running and lifting weights, as well as conducting sustainment training for their combat skills.

We made the best of the holidays with an

outstanding Marine Corps Birthday Ceremony on the ship, and a delicious meal that included steak and lobster. A couple of weeks later, we were treated to a full Thanksgiving dinner with pieces of real turkey instead of that processed stuff. Although we all miss our loved ones back home it has been productive first month.

Semper Fi ~1stSgt Wilson

...people tell me what a shame it was that I had to go back into the service a second time.....but I am a U.S. Marine and I'll be one til I die. ~Ted Williams

Pictures

Aboard the USS Tarawa...



1st PLT, C Company:

Marines of First Platoon, C Company, Battalion Landing Team 1/5; watch the sunrise off the portside of the USS Tarawa as they prepare to conduct an enhanced marksmanship exercise. While sailing in the Pacific, Marines from the Battalion Landing Team continue to improve on perishable skills and maintain standards for combat operations world wide. 11/17/2007



Golf Battery 2/11:



Golf Battery 2/11, an artillery attachment of 136 Marines, assigned to Battalion Landing Team 1/5 receives a short brief on proper procedures and policies pertaining to ship-board deck shoots.

Check out this and other updates at:

www.usmc.mil/11thmeu



H&S Company Awards and Promotions formation. 1 Dec 2007



Fast Roping onto ship.

More Pictures...

Aboard the USS Tarawa

A Harrier taking off...



Oh yes, the huge mosquitoes...



Marines from BLT 1/5 conducting combat marksmanship off the side of the ship.



From Our Chaplain...

To Our Families,

As some of you may be aware, I am on the USS GERMANTOWN which has taken alternative routes than the USS TARAWA and USS CLEVELAND. However, I would like to briefly share with you some of the experiences we have had recently. During our time in beautiful Saipan, we had the opportunity and privilege to perform two community related projects.

One of those projects involved 46 Sailors and Marines who were able to connect with a number of volunteer families in Saipan. These families invited our Sailors and Marines into their homes providing a home-cooked meal and an opportunity to learn more about the island from the native point of view. In many cases, some of the families took the Sailors and Marines they sponsored on a historical tour of the island. Saipan is an island rich in culture, heritage, and military history. It was most definitely a unique and exciting experience.

The other community project allowed our Sailors

and Marines the privilege to partner with the students of Garapan Elementary School in doing a clean-up project through the downtown area. Nearly 125 Sailors, Marines, and students came together to assist. The looks on the faces of the children were amazing! They saw Sailors and Marines who had no connection whatsoever to Saipan take time out of their day to show interest in something that was important to them. The children were so excited as they ran from location to location picking up trash with men and women who devote their lives to defending their cause... A cause that goes much deeper than just the cause for freedom. It's a cause that demonstrates what was seen on the streets of Saipan that day. The cause for men and women of the U.S. armed forces to offer hospitality and service to others genuinely

because they care. It was truly a life-changing experience.

We all hope and pray that you are doing well back home. We think about you often and look forward to the time that we can be reunited. Yet, I think I speak for all of our Sailors and Marines in saying, "It's good to know that what you're doing really *does* make a difference." May God bless you all.

Sincerely,
Ron O'Dell LT, CHC, USN
Chaplain, BLT 1/5



These photos are
from the
COMREL in Saipan.
11/29/07



GOLF BATTERY

Hello to all of the family members. For the past month aboard ship our journey has been filled with nice days, rough seas, and sailing past a lot of land. Happy Belated Thanksgiving! We ate a turkey dinner with all of the fixings; the ship really does a great job. We had a total of five promotions effective 1 December 2007: Lance Corporal Shankar to Corporal and Privates First Class Bolanos, Lyle, and Luna-Ruiz to Lance Corporal. Lance Corporal Prusinowski was nominated for a meritorious promotion to Corporal, won the board, and was promoted on 2 December 2007. The board was very competitive, and he did a stellar job. We are very proud of all of the Marines; they were all well deserved promo-

tions. The Marines are performing superbly in their duties and all of you should be proud, as I know you are. We are working out all of our growing pains and starting to get into a groove. Morale is up and all of the Marines are enjoying ship life. The Tarawa has all the amenities of home: laundry, phone center, barber, computer center, and a very nice gym for everyone to work off the great food they serve at the chow hall. The USS Tarawa is like a floating city, everything is about ten minutes away. We all wish we could be there for the holidays. All of us in Battery G wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please be safe during the holidays and remember that everyone aboard

ship enjoys hearing "MAIL CALL" and receiving a letter. If you notice any problems with pay, have any questions whatsoever, please don't hesitate to contact your Key Volunteer. Remember, all of you are important parts of this deployment, and we couldn't get through it without your support.

Semper Fidelis,
1stSgt Jeffrey G. Monssen
Battery G



Upcoming Family Events

SATURDAY
January 26th
Hosted by Charlie Co.
Come make Valentines!
Your KV will have the details.

SATURDAY
February 16th
Hosted by Alpha Co.
Hearts of Carnival Fun
Your KV will have the details.

And in MARCH...
The Halfway Dinner
Stayed tuned for more details!



Baby Shower

IN MARCH!

If you are expecting a baby, or have delivered a baby during this deployment, please make sure you get in contact with your KV for more info on the baby shower!



Ladies,

We have survived our first month! That is something to celebrate. It has been a month of adjusting. For many, this is a first deployment, and those wives are left with a myriad of questions. Our KV's have done a phenomenal job in disseminating information and helping wives with any difficulties they have had. By now, every wife should know who her KV is. If you don't, please feel free to email me at usmcfam4@gmail.com and I will let you know.

Our November event had a fantastic turnout and everyone had a great time. Our December event will be just as successful. We are truly blessed to have been "adopted" by Ocean Hills Church, and they are working very hard to ensure that our families have a wonderful Christmas.

I hope everyone has a wonderful Christmas, and is looking forward to the New Year, and most especially, the homecoming of our husbands.

~Cindy Burlingame
1/5 KVC

The November Event...

The November Event hosted by H&S Company had a Thanksgiving Theme. We had sandwiches, a HUGE variety of desserts, and we had pillow case and Christmas card decorating tables. To help out with the event we had some extra hands—a Community Group from North Coast Calvary Chapel was there to help make sure the children had help in making their cards and pillow cases.

In keeping with the Marine Corps Birthday, the longest married wife and the most recently married wife received gift baskets. We also had some GREAT door prizes that were given away--\$25 Visa Gift Cards, candles free ice cream, etc. If you missed this event, be sure you make it to the next one!! You don't want to miss out on the fun and miss the chance to meet other wives.

(Funding provided by the KVN funding, donations from the H&S, CEB, and RE-CON Key Volunteers, North Coast Calvary Chapel, and the North Coast Calvary Chapel Girl Scout.)

**COMMANDING OFFICER
1st Battalion, 5th Marines RBE
P.O. Box 555463
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www.usmc.mil/11thmeu

From Our FRO

Dear 1/5 Spouse,

I would first like to start out by saying thank you to all are wonderful KV's assisting the families with the deployment. They themselves have a demanding and argues task in assisting the families. They receive nothing in return and do not get paid for all the hours they spend working. They themselves have a loved one deployed. Thank you and a job well done.

Second, I must emphasize that the only official and absolutely true information concerning your husband will come from me via the KVN. I pass this information to the battalion KVC. She passes

it to the Company KVR, who then passes it to you. At times, Marines/Sailors will call home and tell family members information they "heard". These Marines/Sailors may not be privileged to ALL of the information, causing them to draw conclusions which they then tell their family members. I, on the other hand, will have direct contact with the Battalion Commander and will pass any information he has for spouses directly to the Key Volunteer Coordinator. Please ensure you do not become part of a rumor mill. If the information did not come from the KVN, do not take it as absolute truth. If you hear a rumor and have concerns, feel free to contact your Company KVR or the Battalion KVC. A good rule of thumb is to consider any and all information that is officially disseminated to be in

the PAST Tense. The important thing is Operational Security (OPSEC). If you find yourself in a public place or at your residence on the phone and discussing present or future operations you must always consider someone else is listening. Please refrain from those types of discussions whether it is in person or in a public forum such as MYSPACE.

Respectfully,
Sgt. R. M. RANGER



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